Benny Morris quotes

It is true, as Erskine Childers pointed out long ago, that there were no Arab radio broadcasts urging the Arabs to flee en masse; indeed, there were broadcasts by several Arab radio stations urging them to stay put. (IrishTimes, Thu, Feb 21, 2008)

Benny Morris: The vast majority of Arabs who live in Palestine originated in Palestine, ‘originated' meaning they have been living in Palestine for hundreds of years. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v-Ekju_IyaI

The revised book is a double-edged sword. It is based on many documents that were not available to me when I wrote the original book, most of them from the Israel Defense Forces Archives. What the new material shows is that there were far more Israeli acts of massacre than I had previously thought. To my surprise, there were also many cases of rape. In the months of April-May 1948, units of the Haganah [the pre-state defense force that was the precursor of the IDF] were given operational orders that stated explicitly that they were to uproot the villagers, expel them and destroy the villages themselves.

In Acre four soldiers raped a girl and murdered her and her father. In Jaffa, soldiers of the Kiryati Brigade raped one girl and tried to rape several more. At Hunin, which is in the Galilee, two girls were raped and then murdered. There were one or two cases of rape at Tantura, south of Haifa. There was one case of rape at Qula, in the center of the country. At the village of Abu Shusha, near Kibbutz Gezer [in the Ramle area] there were four female prisoners, one of whom was raped a number of times. And there were other cases. Usually more than one soldier was involved. Usually there were one or two Palestinian girls. In a large proportion of the cases the event ended with murder. Because neither the victims nor the rapists liked to report these events, we have to assume that the dozen cases of rape that were reported, which I found, are not the whole story. They are just the tip of the iceberg.

In some cases four or five people were executed, in others the numbers were 70, 80, 100. There was also a great deal of arbitrary killing. Two old men are spotted walking in a field – they are shot. A woman is found in an abandoned village – she is shot. There are cases such as the village of Dawayima [in the Hebron region], in which a column entered the village with all guns blazing and killed anything that moved.

The worst cases were Saliha (70-80 killed), Deir Yassin (100-110), Lod (250), Dawayima (hundreds) and perhaps Abu Shusha (70). There is no unequivocal proof of a large-scale massacre at Tantura, but war crimes were perpetrated there. At Jaffa there was a massacre about which nothing had been known until now. The same at Arab al Muwassi, in the north. About half of the acts of massacre were part of Operation Hiram [in the north, in October 1948]: at Safsaf, Saliha, Jish, Eilaboun, Arab al Muwasi, Deir al Asad, Majdal Krum, Sasa. In Operation Hiram there was a unusually high concentration of executions of people against a wall or next to a well in an orderly fashion.

That can't be chance. It's a pattern. Apparently, various officers who took part in the operation understood that the expulsion order they received permitted them to do these deeds in order to encourage the population to take to the roads. The fact is that no one was punished for these acts of murder. Ben-Gurion silenced the matter. He covered up for the officers who did the massacres.

One of the revelations in the book is that on October 31, 1948, the commander of the Northern Front, Moshe Carmel, issued an order in writing to his units to expedite the removal of the Arab population. Carmel took this action immediately after a visit by Ben-Gurion to the Northern Command in Nazareth. There is no doubt in my mind that this order originated with Ben-Gurion. Just as the expulsion order for the city of Lod, which was signed by Yitzhak Rabin, was issued immediately after Ben-Gurion visited the headquarters of Operation Dani [July 1948].

From April 1948, Ben-Gurion is projecting a message of transfer. There is no explicit order of his in writing, there is no orderly comprehensive policy, but there is an atmosphere of [population] transfer. The transfer idea is in the air. The entire leadership understands that this is the idea. The officer corps understands what is required of them. Under Ben-Gurion, a consensus of transfer is created.

Of course Ben-Gurion was a transferist. He understood that there could be no Jewish state with a large and hostile Arab minority in its midst. There would be no such state. It would not be able to exist.

Ben-Gurion was right. If he had not done what he did, a state would not have come into being. That has to be clear. It is impossible to evade it. Without the uprooting of the Palestinians, a Jewish state would not have arisen here.

There is no justification for acts of rape. There is no justification for acts of massacre. Those are war crimes. But in certain conditions, expulsion is not a war crime. I don't think that the expulsions of 1948 were war crimes. You can't make an omelet without breaking eggs. You have to dirty your hands.

A society that aims to kill you forces you to destroy it. When the choice is between destroying or being destroyed, it's better to destroy.

RE: the commanders of Operation Dani : I definitely understand them. I understand their motives. I don't think they felt any pangs of conscience, and in their place I wouldn't have felt pangs of conscience. Without that act, they would not have won the war and the state would not have come into being.

There are circumstances in history that justify ethnic cleansing. I know that this term is completely negative in the discourse of the 21st century, but when the choice is between ethnic cleansing and genocide - the annihilation of your people -I prefer ethnic cleansing.

That is what Zionism faced. A Jewish state would not have come into being without the uprooting of 700,000 Palestinians. Therefore it was necessary to uproot them. There was no choice but to expel that population. It was necessary to cleanse the hinterland and cleanse the border areas and cleanse the main roads.

I feel sympathy for the Palestinian people, which truly underwent a hard tragedy. I feel sympathy for the refugees themselves. But if the desire to establish a Jewish state here is legitimate, there was no other choice. It was impossible to leave a large fifth column in the country. From the moment the Yishuv [pre-1948 Jewish community in Palestine] was attacked by the Palestinians and afterward by the Arab states, there was no choice but to expel the Palestinian population. To uproot it in the course of war.

But in the end the Arabs have 22 states. The Jewish people did not have even one state. There was no reason in the world why it should not have one state. Therefore, from my point of view, the need to establish this state in this place overcame the injustice that was done to the Palestinians by uprooting them.

Even the great American democracy could not have been created without the annihilation of the Indians. There are cases in which the overall, final good justifies harsh and cruel acts that are committed in the course of history.

But I do not identify with Ben-Gurion. I think he made a serious historical mistake in 1948. Even though he understood the demographic issue and the need to establish a Jewish state without a large Arab minority, he got cold feet during the war. In the end, he faltered.

If he was already engaged in expulsion, maybe he should have done a complete job. I know that this stuns the Arabs and the liberals and the politically correct types. But my feeling is that this place would be quieter and know less suffering if the matter had been resolved once and for all. If Ben-Gurion had carried out a large expulsion and cleansed the whole country - the whole Land of Israel, as far as the Jordan River. It may yet turn out that this was his fatal mistake. If he had carried out a full expulsion – rather than a partial one – he would have stabilized the State of Israel for generations.

If the end of the story turns out to be a gloomy one for the Jews, it will be because Ben-Gurion did not complete the transfer in 1948. Because he left a large and volatile demographic reserve in the West Bank and Gaza and within Israel itself.

I assert that a mistake was made here. Yes. The non-completion of the transfer was a mistake.

In the present circumstances it is neither moral nor realistic. The world would not allow it, the Arab world would not allow it, it would destroy the Jewish society from within. But I am ready to tell you that in other circumstances, apocalyptic ones, which are liable to be realized in five or ten years, I can see expulsions. If we find ourselves with atomic weapons around us, or if there is a general Arab attack on us and a situation of warfare on the front with Arabs in the rear shooting at convoys on their way to the front, acts of expulsion will be entirely reasonable. They may even be essential.

The Israeli Arabs are a time bomb. Their slide into complete Palestinization has made them an emissary of the enemy that is among us. They are a potential fifth column. In both demographic and security terms they are liable to undermine the state. So that if Israel again finds itself in a situation of existential threat, as in 1948, it may be forced to act as it did then. If we are attacked by Egypt (after an Islamist revolution in Cairo) and by Syria, and chemical and biological missiles slam into our cities, and at the same time Israeli Palestinians attack us from behind, I can see an expulsion situation. It could happen. If the threat to Israel is existential, expulsion will be justified.

He wants to send us back to Europe, to the sea we came from. He truly sees us as a Crusader state and he thinks about the Crusader precedent and wishes us a Crusader end.

The entire Palestinian national elite is prone to see us as Crusaders and is driven by the phased plan.

They can't tolerate the existence of a Jewish state - not in 80 percent of the country and not in 30 percent. From their point of view, the Palestinian state must cover the whole Land of Israel.

There is not going to be peace in the present generation. There will not be a solution. We are doomed to live by the sword. I'm already fairly old, but for my children that is especially bleak. I don't know if they will want to go on living in a place where there is no hope. Even if Israel is not destroyed, we won't see a good, normal life here in the decades ahead.

The bombing of the buses and restaurants really shook me. They made me understand the depth of the hatred for us. They made me understand that the Palestinian, Arab and Muslim hostility toward Jewish existence here is taking us to the brink of destruction. I don't see the suicide bombings as isolated acts. They express the deep will of the Palestinian people. That is what the majority of the Palestinians want. They want what happened to the bus to happen to all of us.

The Palestinians are retaliating now not only for yesterday's closure but for the Nakba as well. But that is not a sufficient explanation. The peoples of Africa were oppressed by the European powers no less than the Palestinians were oppressed by us, but nevertheless I don't see African terrorism in London, Paris or Brussels. The Germans killed far more of us than we killed the Palestinians, but we aren't blowing up buses in Munich and Nuremberg. So there is something else here, something deeper, that has to do with Islam and Arab culture.

There is a deep problem in Islam. It's a world whose values are different. A world in which human life doesn't have the same value as it does in the West, in which freedom, democracy, openness and creativity are alien. A world that makes those who are not part of the camp of Islam fair game. Revenge is also important here. Revenge plays a central part in the Arab tribal culture. Therefore, the people we are fighting and the society that sends them have no moral inhibitions. If it obtains chemical or biological or atomic weapons, it will use them. If it is able, it will also commit genocide.

But when one has to deal with a serial killer, it's not so important to discover why he became a serial killer. What's important is to imprison the murderer or to execute him.

The barbarians who want to take our lives are serial killers. The people the Palestinian society sends to carry out the terrorist attacks, and in some way the Palestinian society itself as well. At the moment, that society is in the state of being a serial killer. It is a very sick society. It should be treated the way we treat individuals who are serial killers. Something like a cage has to be built for them. I know that sounds terrible. It is really cruel. But there is no choice. There is a wild animal there that has to be locked up in one way or another.

An iron wall is a good image. An iron wall is the most reasonable policy for the coming generation. My colleague Avi Shlein described this well: What Jabotinsky proposed is what Ben-Gurion adopted. In the 1950s, there was a dispute between Ben-Gurion and Moshe Sharett. Ben-Gurion argued that the Arabs understand only force and that ultimate force is the one thing that will persuade them to accept our presence here. He was right. That's not to say that we don't need diplomacy. Both toward the West and for our own conscience, it's important that we strive for a political solution. But in the end, what will decide their readiness to accept us will be force alone. Only the recognition that they are not capable of defeating us.

Preserving my people is more important than universal moral concepts.

I think there is a clash between civilizations here [as Huntington argues]. I think the West today resembles the Roman Empire of the fourth, fifth and sixth centuries: The barbarians are attacking it and they may also destroy it.

I think the values I mentioned earlier are values of barbarians – the attitude toward democracy, freedom, openness; the attitude toward human life. In that sense they are barbarians. The Arab world as it is today is barbarian.

The West is stronger but it's not clear whether it knows how to repulse this wave of hatred. The phenomenon of the mass Muslim penetration into the West and their settlement there is creating a dangerous internal threat. A similar process took place in Rome. They let the barbarians in and they toppled the empire from within.

The possibility of annihilation exists.

The whole Zionist project is apocalyptic. It exists within hostile surroundings and in a certain sense its existence is unreasonable. It wasn't reasonable for it to succeed in 1881 and it wasn't reasonable for it to succeed in 1948 and it's not reasonable that it will succeed now. Nevertheless, it has come this far. In a certain way it is miraculous. I live the events of 1948, and 1948 projects itself on what could happen here. Yes, I think of Armageddon. It's possible. Within the next 20 years there could be an atomic war here.

Zionism was not a mistake. The desire to establish a Jewish state here was a legitimate one, a positive one. But given the character of Islam and given the character of the Arab nation, it was a mistake to think that it would be possible to establish a tranquil state here that lives in harmony with its surroundings.

A people that suffered for 2,000 years, that went through the Holocaust, arrives at its patrimony but is thrust into a renewed round of bloodshed, that is perhaps the road to annihilation. In terms of cosmic justice, that's terrible. It's far more shocking than what happened in 1948 to a small part of the Arab nation that was then in Palestine.

Destruction could be the end of this process. It could be the end of the Zionist experiment. And that's what really depresses and scares me

We are the greater victims in the course of history and we are also the greater potential victim. Even though we are oppressing the Palestinians, we are the weaker side here.

Transfer (expulsion) was inevitable and inbuilt into Zionism-because it sought to transform a land which was 'Arab' into a 'Jewish' state and a Jewish state could not have arisen without a major displacement of Arab population.

You go into some detail in your book about Ben Gurion's hyperawareness of the public-relations implications of everything he did, and his caution in expressing support for transfer. You mention that he made disingenuous entries in his diary to throw historians off the scent of his support for transfer. How do you go about interpreting someone who went to such lengths to disguise what he thought?

He doesn't dissemble about everything, but he's very Machiavellian. He's extremely intelligent, and he's very, very careful and serious about the things he puts down on paper. This is clear. Now, how do we know this? We know this because when he meets other people, sometimes these other people also write diary entries about the meetings. And consistently when you compare these entries, these documents, you see that Ben Gurion is always omitting mention of things which in some ways could be seen as morally dubious by later generations of historians. Things like the destruction of Arab villages and the expulsion of Arabs. The man was extremely clever, and I think he understood that he was setting up a state. He understood this more or less from the beginning of his political activity in the beginning of the twentieth century. And I think he understood the way history works, the way propaganda works, the way historians can feed into the political process later in the day. He took great care not to give historians hostages, in the form of intemperate or morally careless or dubious remarks. That doesn't mean that his diaries are all one big pack of lies. They aren't. They're actually very useful, a major source for historians about the whole of the 1930s, '40s, and '50s. But you have to be very careful to use them in correlation with other texts.

I think the Jews, having lived in exile and as minorities in the Gentile world over the past two thousand years, learned that they had to be very wary and careful of the Gentiles. It was inbred into these Jewish officials, diplomats, ministers, and so on. In 1948, they almost all hailed from Eastern Europe, and they had a lot of fear and suspicion. There was a sense that there's a good likelihood that the Gentile you're talking to from the United Nations-the American officer, the Turkish officer, whoever-has anti-Semitism in him. That he isn't full of good will toward the Jewish state but rather the opposite. And therefore, you must handle him very carefully and even with a certain amount of deceit.

Ben Gurion especially would lie quite bluntly to lots of people about lots of things in the course of '48 and feel good about it, because he knew that it was much more important, morally speaking, to assure the survival of his people and of his state than to speak truthfully to some guy from Turkey or France.

And it was also standard at the time for Westerners like Ethridge and the British to look at the Jews differently from the Arabs, because the Jews were Europeans. They didn't expect decent behavior from Third World natives, like Arabs, Africans, and so on. They expected them to abide by lower standards of morality. Jews were always held to higher standards.

when I think of Israel's behavior today in the occupied territories, Israel is behaving with an enormous amount of restraint vis-a-vis the Palestinians and their provocations. The Israelis don't go around bombing Palestinian buses, though we could probably destroy a thousand Palestinian buses for every bus they destroyed full of civilians in Israel. But we don't do that. And yet the world community criticizes Israel and doesn't regard what Israel is doing as restrained.

What has changed in my views is my perception of the Palestinian side during the past decade. Whereas in the 1990s I was fairly optimistic that the Palestinians had accepted in their hearts the need for a compromise and for a two-state solution, now I'm very doubtful. I don't think the Palestinians really want to agree to a two-state solution. They want a one-state solution, which means Israel's destruction and the turning of all of Palestine into one Arab majority state. That's what has changed in my thinking.

From my realization about the Palestinians stems a number of conclusions. If it is true that the Palestinians—historically, monolithically, continuously and probably forever—are disagreeable to a two-state solution, to the acceptance of Israel's existence.

And what this has led me to conclude is that in 1948, it would probably have been better for everybody to have had all the Palestinians cross the Jordan River rather than having many of them stay on the Israeli side at the end of the war. In other words, if Israel had been established on all the territory between the Mediterranean and the Jordan River and the Palestinians had crossed the river and turned Transjordan into a state of their own, both peoples would have probably been happier, and the Middle East would certainly have been a pleasanter place over the next fifty years.

there is a connection between current policy on the Arab side—the demand for the right of return of the refugees to their homes and lands in Palestine-and the question of who is to blame for what happened in '48. There's sort of a formula here that essentially asserts that if the Israelis were by and large to blame for the displacement of the Palestinians, therefore they are guilty and must agree to a full-scale return of the refugees. On the other hand, if the Palestinians have more blame in the flight or the displacement of the Palestinians, their argument for a return of the refugees is diminished. So there is a political significance to the apportioning of blame.

A lot of Arab critics have become hot and bothered about the so-called ethnic cleansing of Arabs in 1948. But they neglect to mention that ethnic cleansing is a sport long and consistently practiced by the Arabs, from Muhammad, who ethnically cleansed Arabia of its Jewish tribes back in the seventh century, down to the Arab world in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, which systematically cleansed their communities of Jews. Almost no Jews live in the Arab world today-in Yemen, Iraq, Egypt, etcetera.

I think I'm basically depressed. I think unless there is a basic change of heart and mind—a change of mindset— among Palestinians and in the Arab world in general about Israel, we're in for a continuous struggle over the coming decades. Basically what is needed here is a compromise based on two states, and that in effect requires Arab acceptance of Israel's legitimacy. But so long as there is this view of Israel as a cancer in the Middle East-which like a Crusader's stake must be uprooted and will be uprooted-there will be no compromise here. It doesn't matter what agreement is signed or what temporary ceasefires occur. In the long term of history, it's meaningless. So long as Israel's legitimacy is questioned, its existence is not assured.

My aim is to open readers' eyes to the truth. The objective is to expose the goals of the Palestinian national movement to extinguish the Jewish national project and to inherit all of Palestine for the Arabs and Islam.

The Zionist movement started out calling for the establishment of a Jewish state on all the territory of the Land of Israel, but from 1937 on, its leaders gradually abandoned the claim of 'it's all mine' and adhered to the ambition to form a sovereign Jewish state in part of the territory of the Land of Israel. Thus it changed its approach and consented to territorial compromise: that is, to the idea of two states for two peoples, a decision that derived in part from the logic of dividing the land between the two peoples living in it.

The Palestinian national movement has remained unchanged, throughout the different periods of the struggle, whether under the leadership of Hajj Amin al-Husayni or his successor, Yasser Arafat, says Morris with near-palpable disgust. It did not even change during the years of the Oslo process. In the end, both sides of the Palestinian movement - the fundamentalists led by Hamas and the secular bloc led by Fatah - are interested in Muslim rule over all of Palestine, with no Jewish state and no partition.

In the Zionist movement, they understood - under the impress of Hitler's deeds and rising anti-Semitism in Europe - that the Jewish people needed a refuge and a state. Because of the urgency, and because they had to save the nation, the Zionists were prepared to abandon the dream of Greater Israel and to make do with part of it. The same policy was supported by the major powers that also strove for compromise. This impact - the Holocaust, the demand of the major powers and even a sense of justice - led the Zionists to conclude that two states for two peoples should be established here. This conclusion was manifested, of course, in the acceptance of the UN Partition Plan in 1947.

This was the guiding line of the Zionist movement in the years 1948-1977, and has been again since 1992. Aside from a few years of euphoria in which the right held power and propounded the idea of Greater Israel, the Israeli position was one of compromise. The brief euphoria dissipated very quickly. Since the first intifada in 1988, about two-thirds of Israelis support territorial compromise. The Palestinians, no. They have consistently - even if outwardly they seemed ready for compromise – never accepted the legitimacy and the claims of the Zionists. The Palestinian movement doesn't care about Jewish history. They deny the connection between the Jews and the Land of Israel. The Jewish narrative is completely foreign to them.

It's true there's a difference between the extremists, who say directly that they want to wipe out the State of Israel, and the secular nationalists, who outwardly say they're ready for a compromise accord. But actually, both of them, if you read their words very carefully, want all of Palestine. The secular leaders - if you can call them that - like Yasser Arafat and President Mahmoud Abbas, are not prepared to accept a formula of two states for two peoples. So as not to scare the goyim, they project a vagueness about it, but they think in terms of expulsion and elimination.

Arafat, since the '70s, after Fatah's guerrilla warfare failed to yield results, concluded that the liberation of the homeland would be accomplished through a 'policy of stages.' The idea of the 'struggle in stages' was meant to achieve the gradual elimination of Israel and a solution of a single Arab state. In other words, the Palestinian Liberation Organization leaders continually put on a conciliatory face in order to please the West, but actually their goal was to eliminate Israel in stages, since they couldn't do it in one blow. The same staggered strategy, which sees the establishment of a state in the occupied territories as the first stage in the conquest of the entire land, was, in their view, better than a direct strategy of endless military confrontation. Abbas says it day in and day out, and continues to demand the right of return.

The realization of the right of return essentially requires the destruction of the Jewish state. For the same reason, Abbas currently refuses to hold negotiations with the Israelis. Because negotiations could lead to a resolution to the conflict. He has no desire or intention of reaching a solution of two states for two peoples.

The book was written several years after the end of the second intifada [in 2005], under the impression that it [had] left. The book is relevant to the extent that the Palestinian discourse and the Palestinian objectives have not changed, and their actions, i.e. terror, are continuing by means of the rockets that are being launched almost daily, and could also return when circumstances warrant by means of suicide bombers. In this context, it is vital to show the continuous, historical line of thinking that characterizes the Palestinians ? which, at its base, does not give Jews any legitimate right to this place. The first section of the Hamas charter says, 'In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate ... Israel will rise and will remain erect until Islam eliminates it as it had eliminated its predecessors.' It is important that we recognize who we are facing.

The demonization is not equal on the two sides. In the Israeli education system, in general, there is no demonization of the Arab. He might not be described positively, but he's not the Devil. There, the Jews are completely demonized. The Palestinian authorities are busy deeply implanting the demonization. The Palestinian people think we can be made extinct. We don't think that about the Palestinians. What I am doing is describing the history; I'm not demonizing. The book describes the Palestinian position. If there's demonization in it, it simply derives from the things that they themselves say and do. I'm only letting them express themselves. What they say is what has adhered to their image.

They came here just before the founding of the state, says their son, at his home in Srigim Li On, in the Elah Valley. After a brief time on Kibbutz Ein Hahoresh, my parents were part of a group that founded Kibbutz Yasur, which was built on the ruins of the village of Al-Birwa, the birthplace of Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish. That's why I feel a certain connection with Darwish.

I said that the Palestinians should be put in a cage so they won't be able to get here to place bombs in buses and restaurants. The word 'cage' did not go over well and perhaps it was the wrong word to use. Of course, I meant fenced off. As

As for the refugee situation, I still maintain that it was a requirement of the reality. Since the Palestinians tried and intended to destroy us, and their villages and towns served as bases in wartime, the winning side had to take over villages and expel populations.

Massacres are always reprehensible, but the Jews behaved much better than other nations in similar circumstances.

There simply was no readiness for peace on the other side. They didn't want to accept us here. As long as the Jews wanted a state of their own, under their control, no acceptable accord could be reached with the Arabs. Not before '48 and certainly not afterward, when the Arab side was also prompted by vengefulness.

Revenge is one of the explanations that Morris places on the table to explain the intransigence of the Palestinian national movement. Aside from revenge, the Palestinians have absolute faith in the justice of their side, which derives in part from religious faith. What God commands, and what his interpreters on Earth say that God commands, is the definite truth. While the Jews are much more skeptical about this sort of interpretation, the Palestinians feel that justice is on their side and that God doesn't want the Holy Land to be shared with another people.

They absolutely believe that time is working in their favor. And the Palestinians feel that they have the backing of 400 million ?(or so?) Arabs and another billion-odd Muslims around the world. So why compromise?

I say that the compromise proposals that have been continually put forward since ‘67, that are based on a Jewish state on about 80 percent of the territory of Mandatory Palestine and a Palestinian state on about 20 percent of the territory, are not realistic. The Palestinian leadership and people will not be satisfied with 20 percent of the territory of Palestine. A state composed of Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem will not satisfy them. They will want to expand - to Jordan, to Israel, to Sinai, or in all three directions at once. In order to satisfy the need for growth and territorial expansion, a merging of the West Bank, Gaza and Transjordan might satisfy the Palestinian urge for more territory and constitute a more reasonable and durable accord.

Ariel Sharon once talked about turning Jordan into Palestine - in other words, ousting the kings, putting the Palestinians in charge in their place and thereby solving the Palestinian demand for a state. But I am talking about something different: The bulk of the West Bank united with Transjordan in one state.

Because it is still more logical than an accord between us and the Palestinians that is based on a division of Mandatory Palestine. The logic of a large Palestinian-Jordanian state is more valid than any partition plan - which I support, by the way. Justice and logic say that the Palestinians should have a state alongside Israel, but the portion of the land that is designated for them in a simple partition will not satisfy them. And so the territory east of the Jordan River also has to be inserted into the equation in order to give the Palestinians a vision of space. The West Bank, even without the Jewish settlers who are there now, is a very constricted space. Gaza is one big slum. Jordan-Palestine could be the basis for an accord that will last, even if it cannot be achieved in our time. For now it is impractical and unrealistic. So the message is certainly pessimistic.

The only optimistic thing I can say is that the history of the Zionist movement and of Israel is so unusual and unpredictable that the end of the story, or the next part of the story, could yet surprise us in a good way. Maybe. I yearn for such a surprise.

I have been pessimistic since the year 2000 when in effect the Palestinians rejected a reasonable offer of peace by Ehud Barak and a slightly better offer by Clinton in December 2000. From that point on, the Palestinians displayed a disinterest in peace and a two-state solution. What they want is all of Palestine. And so whether you have negotiations or not, their end game is Israel's elimination.

The diplomatic position of Israel has deteriorated steadily over the past few years and especially in the last two years under Netanyahu. He is not considered by the world community as a credible peace partner. He doesn't do the right things or say the right things or even make the right bodily gestures. He doesn't seem really to be interested in peace.

These two peoples are going to live quietly together? Who are we kidding? They are going to kill each other and the Arabs will probably end up winning and the Jews will leave ... if there ever is a binational state.

I don't think I'm a right-winger. But I wouldn't say I'm a wild left-winger, either.

The Arab Spring gave more of a voice to the Arab street than it's ever had. You could call that moving in the direction of democracy. But what ended up happening was that the Arab street was basically Islamic fundamentalist. That's what came out of the elections in Egypt, in Tunis. And that's what's probably happening in Syria. These people hate democracy. They will only use it get to power.

Abbas is not simplistic. He's disavowed violence since the second intifada. On the other hand, he didn't exactly protest when Arafat said no to the peace process. Abbas believes in the diplomatic way. But what I think he really wants is all of Palestine.

I write history. A historian is supposed to write the truth about what the documents tell him. Some people say the things I wrote were subversive against Zionism because they showed Jews behaving badly. I don't think that's subversive. I think the truth is good.

If I wanted to not write the truth, I'd go work for the Foreign Ministry propaganda department. But in a sense, I made amends by later writing an entire history of the 1948 war. When you look at the whole war, the Palestinian refugee problem is much more intelligible and less brutal. You can see clearly it was a product of self-defense. Arabs attacked Jews and the Jews had to clear the roads and border areas because the Arab armies were about to invade. Certain actions were necessary if Israel wanted to survive.

the Israelis saw it in 1948. Three years after the Holocaust, you have to give the Israelis the right to feel that when the Arabs were shouting bloody murder on the radio, they meant it. They felt that if the Arabs had won, they would have killed everybody.